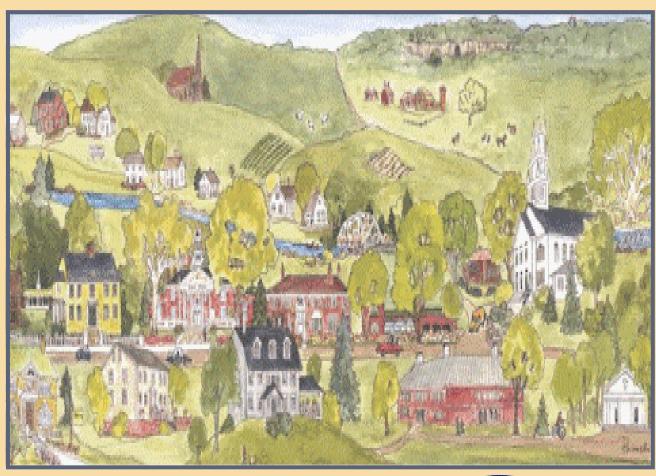
Town of Simsbury FY 2020-2021 Annual Report







Greetings from the BOF, BOE, BOS Chairs

We are pleased to present the 159th Annual Report of the Town of Simsbury. The goal of the report is to provide our residents and businesses important information about the Town's financial position and performance during the reporting period, fiscal year July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021.

The Board of Finance is a citizen oversight board that serves as the Town's primary budget making authority. The Board works in a collaborative manner with the Town Manager and the Boards of Selectmen and Education to ensure the highest quality services at the lowest possible cost, while ensuring long term fiscal discipline. A top priority of your town government is to make sure you, as a resident, have an accurate accounting of how your tax dollars are spent and a summary of town functions, goals and accomplishments.

We are pleased to report that Simsbury's fiscal condition continues to be strong with a Standard and Poor's AAA rating, the highest bond rating that a municipality can achieve. The Board of Finance strives to maintain adequate fund balances and a balanced budget that covers our expenses while recognizing the importance of keeping taxes affordable for our citizens.

Excellent public schools, historical charm, preserved open space, recreational and cultural offerings, strong governance, and quality services keep Simsbury a beautiful and award-winning place to live, work and retire.

It is an honor and privilege to serve as your elected members of the Simsbury Board of Finance. We thank the many dedicated members of our community who give of their time and talent to serve on boards and commissions and Town and Board of Education staff who work hard every day to serve our residents and businesses.

Regards,

Rob Pomeroy, Board of Finance Chair FY 20/21

There is no way to write this letter without a focus on the pandemic. It has not only run our own lives since March of 2020, but has also been the main factor in guiding how we educated our students in the 2020/2021 school year.

In the summer of 2020, we saw our entire community of stakeholders come together on two different task forces to ensure that we would get all students set up for a successful school year during unprecedented times. Our Reopening Task Force made sure that we had everything we needed to make our schools safe, clean and productive. From tents for lunches, classroom layouts to ensure pandemic spacing, and the all-important hand sanitizer (in vast amounts), our staff got everything up and running before school began.

The Teaching and Learning Task Force ensured that our teachers could reach all students whether in-person or online. Through the newly built Distance Learning Academy, our teachers and students did amazing work while adapting to a brand new way of teaching. Our caring, kind and compassionate teachers continued to guide in-person students to flourish through a challenging year.

The Simsbury Public Schools is an organization that I am proud to serve. Our superintendent and central office staff have worked tirelessly in support of all our teachers, para-educators, administrators, custodians, cafeteria staff and support staff at every building. I sincerely thank every school employee for their endless professionalism, kindness, and determination.

I extend my gratitude to our community for lending their support to us through this challenging year. We look forward to starting to build you a new Latimer Lane School in this upcoming year and are excited for the future of Simsbury Public Schools.

Regards,

Susan Salina, Board of Education Chair FY 20/21

As I conclude my second term as your First Selectman I am more convinced than ever that there is no community like Simsbury. I believe our spirit of civic engagement and volunteerism is at the heart of what makes Simsbury different. For a year and a half we have endured a once in a lifetime pandemic, yet throughout, we have seen unending creativity and perseverance.

I applaud the unending determination of our 350th Committee who continued to imagine and reimagine how to celebrate safely among ever changing gathering protocols. Through grit, creativity, and teamwork, the Committee organized numerous events that safely brought our community together to celebrate this milestone.

I applaud our incredible Town staff who met this challenge with equal creativity; delivering services virtually, thinking beyond business as usual, while following the guidance of our trusted public health partners.

Under the form of government we adopted nearly 4 years ago, our Board of Selectmen provides strategic direction and governance, while our Town Manager oversees the day-to-day work of running the town. As you will see through this annual report, our Board of Selectmen in partnership with the Boards of Education and Finance, have continued to invest in our strengths as a community: among them, our schools and our open space. I thank our voters for approving a much-needed renovation to Latimer Lane Elementary and a strategic acquisition of open space known as Meadowood. We have continued to invest in our sidewalk and bike path infrastructure, and this year we cut the ribbon on our newest park, Hopbrook Landing at the Flower Bridge.

In the coming year, our Board of Selectmen will be working with a broad range of community stakeholders to determine how to invest \$7.5M in federal recovery money that will be coming to Simsbury. As we continue to move through, and hopefully beyond the pandemic, I look forward to continued engagement with our community as we write our next chapter together.

Kindly,

Eric Wellman, First Selectman, FY 20/21



Town Manager's Office

The Town Manager is appointed by the Board of Selectmen to serve as the chief executive officer of the Town. She is responsible for the oversight of all Town departments, implementing all acts and policies of the Board and all resolutions and ordinances adopted by the Town. The Office is responsible for the implementation of policies and initiatives, the administration of the human resources program, risk management, and supports the Town's economic development activities.

2020-2021 Initiatives and Accomplishments

- Coordinated the Town's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the reopening of Town facilities to walk-in visitors.
- Following a citizen petition initiative, staff coordinated a special Town Meeting and referendum regarding the acquisition of the 288 acres of open space known as Meadowood.
- Finalized and implemented the Ordinance to Prohibit the Intentional Feeding of Wildlife.
- With support from the EDC, researched business incentives and updated the Business Incentive Policy; the new policy was adopted by the Board of Selectmen in February 2021.
- Along with the EDC and Planning staff, continued to conduct business outreach visits to collect feedback on doing business in Simsbury.
- Completed a comprehensive 5-year agreement with the Board of Education reflecting shared services between the parties. Formalized shared financial management services with the BOE (shift from temporary to permanent). Also established the sharing of certain risk management and employee benefits services.
- Facilitated the creation and adoption of the Open Space Natural Stewardship Policy. Draft Open Space Acquisition Policy is in development. Model agricultural lease RFP for town-owned agricultural lands nearing completion and model agricultural practices being developed.



Pictured above: Special Town Meeting on the Meadowood acquisition – Simsbury Farms Ice Rink, April 24, 2021

Finance Department

The Finance Department includes financial administration, assessment and revenue collection. The Department's mission is to provide the highest level of fiscal integrity and department support through training, prudent policies and business practices within its procurement, payroll, accounts payable, accounting and reporting, tax collection and debt management.

- Awarded the GFOA Award for Excellence in Financial Reporting.
- Maintained AAA credit rating.
- Completed the annual financial audit for fiscal year 2019/20 with an unmodified opinion from the audit firm Blum, Shapiro & Co., the highest opinion possible.
- Completed fiscal year 2020/21 debt issuance.
- Maintained tax collection rate in excess of 99%.
- Updated the Debt Policy.
- Updated the Fund Balance Policy.
- Implemented Financial Portions of the New Accounting System.
- On-boarded new Accountant.
- Implemented financial management services with the Board of Education.



Photo by Leo Collins

<u>Information Technology</u>

The Department oversees technology systems and operations of municipal offices, and provides services to the Board of Education Central Office, Regional Probate Court and the Housing Authority. The Department participates in monthly meetings with the Technology Task Force and IT Steering Committee on technology activities, issues and recommendations.

2020-2021 Initiatives and Accomplishments

- Made WiFi enhancements for public access networks at Simsbury Public Library.
- Implemented cloud-based applications for email services, backup, archiving and applied security levels.
- Collaborated with the Police Department on implementation of body cameras.
- Migrated to hyper-converged network storage environment that lowers operating expenditures as well as provides a single dashboard for administration.
- Configured and supported Election Day 2020 satellite voting locations as directed by the Registrar of Voters.
- Successfully administered and managed remote user environment for "work-at-home" employees that included re-engineering hardware and software for over 50 employees during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Town Clerk's Office

The Town Clerk's Office serves as the liaison between the local government and the residents and patrons of Simsbury, making sure that information is easily accessible and reliably provided, all while delivering the highest quality of service.

- Managed and oversaw the issuance of nearly 12,000 absentee ballots for the August 2020 primary and November 2020 election.
- Completed renovations to the vault, including shelving, flooring, lighting and painting.
- Onboarded a new Assistant Town Clerk.

Registrars of Voters/Election Administration

The Registrars of Voters administer elections, primaries, and referendums for the Town of Simsbury, conduct an annual canvass of Simsbury voters, and maintain the Town's voter rolls according to State statutes.

2020-2021 Initiatives and Accomplishments

- The Registrars of Voters recruited several community members who completed state certification to serve as moderators for future elections.
- The elections team collaborated with the Board of Education to implement the Safe Polls Plan during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Hired more than 100 poll workers who worked in-person at Democratic and Republican Presidential Preference Primaries in August 2020, the Presidential Election in November 2020, and the municipal budget referendum in April 2021.
- In cooperation with the Town Clerk's office, processed and counted more than 7,000 absentee ballots for the November 2020 election.

Simsbury Public Library

The Simsbury Public Library educates and strengthens the community by providing free and equal access to information, resources and experiences, inspiring our community to discover and connect, enriching lives while approaching the future together.

- Completed an interior refresh and reorganization project, including new paint and carpet for the building.
- Reopened the building for in-person service in September 2020 in gradual steps following health and safety protocols.
- Restarted in-person outdoors children's programming.
- Continued to provide curbside pickup for the residents' convenience and comfortability.
- Recruited and on-boarded a Teen Services Librarian.
- Received a \$19,000 grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, as part of the American Recovery Plan Act, through the Connecticut State Library. This grant will fund the purchase of outdoor material pickup lockers, as well as a book bike for community outreach.

Culture, Parks and Recreation

The Department is responsible for the administration of the Town's parks, recreational facilities and recreational programs. The Department provides a wide range of programs and recreational opportunities that contribute to the environment, needs, and interests of the community. The programs and services provided by this Department contribute to the quality of life in the community, and are an integral part of Simsbury's health, welfare, attractiveness, and economic vitality.

2020-2021 Initiatives and Accomplishments

- Worked creatively and diligently throughout COVID-19 pandemic to offer safe and enjoyable parks, leisure facilities and programs to Simsbury residents
- Repainted the Russell Shaw Golf Clubhouse and Performing Art Center Bandshell and made exterior repairs to keep these structures in good condition.
- Installed an irrigation system at the new Hop Brook Landing Park, helping to ensure a beautiful park for residents to enjoy.
- Conducted a competitive bid process for a new golf restaurant operator and golf professional services. While a new restaurant operator was selected through the process, the Town is also pleased to extend its relationship with long time golf pro, John Verrengia, and his staff.
- The Simsbury Farms Ice Rink has been undergoing a major three-part renovation. In FY21 a new condenser and rink mechanicals control panel were installed, the ice rink interior was painted and repaired where needed. An new rink chiller is the final piece of the renovation and is expected in spring of 2022.
- An energy efficiency project regarding the conversion of rink, platform tennis courts, and tennis court lighting to efficient LED lighting was conducted.
- The Parks and Open Space Master Plan, with the assistance of our consults from Weston and Sampson, was completed and presented to the Board of Selectmen in October 2020. This document will be the road map for setting maintenance priorities and funding request considerations for the next decade.



Drake Hill Flower Bridge Photo by Jill Henrich

Community and Social Services

The Community and Social Services Department assists residents with their social, emotional and financial needs while welcoming the commonalities and diversities of all who walk through our doors.

- Continued partnership with and, provided funding to the Simsbury Police Department, Board of Education, Simsbury Public Library, Community for Care, and Simsbury SPIRIT Council to support initiatives and programming on topics related to equity and diversity, safety, substance abuse prevention, healthy family relations, and mental health concerns with a particular focus on our youth.
- Continued to provide a high level of customer service virtually and with contact-free methods; continued to provide essential programs and services to our Senior Center and Social Services clients.
- Facilitated \$122,035 in federal heating assistance by serving as intake site for the Connecticut Energy Assistance Program.
- Completed 137 Renters' Rebate applications, resulting in \$63,152 rebated to our residents.
- Through the Back to School program, the Department provided assistance for 66 families with a total of 141 students.
- Provided 43 families with 89 children with assistance for the holiday season.
- Expanded fabric mask sewing program, distributing a total of 3,636 masks to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Served a total of 2,764 meals with an average of 51 participants per week as part of the Grab and Go lunch program for older adults.
- Used \$4,500 in grant funding to purchase additional "kid friendly" food for 26 families per month on average during the pandemic.
- Continued to provide small grants to people experiencing financial emergencies and struggling to meet their basic needs. A total of 58 people received financial assistance. Funds for this are provided through donations, trust funds, and other non-profits.



Food drive



Mask sewing program

Public Works

The Public Works Department manages and maintains the Town's infrastructure, including roads, public buildings, and the transfer station in a cost effective and efficient manner that benefits the safety and comfort of our residents and employees.

2020-2021 Initiatives and Accomplishments

- Completed over 500 service requests from residents.
- The Highway Division paved over 10 miles of roadway and crack sealed over 9 miles of roads as part of our ongoing pavement management program.
- Public Works took the lead for the 8-month long FEMA reimbursement process, which resulted in a payment of \$107,624 to the Town for recovery work from tropical storm Isaias.
- Hosted two regional Household Hazardous Waste events held in October 2020 and June 2021 serviced a total of 1,631 vehicles from Avon, Canton, Farmington, Granby, Simsbury and Suffield.
- Through the contracted operation of the Bulky Waste and Recycling facility on Wolcott Road, over 623 tons of materials were recycled.
- During the summer of 2021, Public Works oversaw the removal and installation of new sidewalks on Elm Street in Tariffville.

Water Pollution

Simsbury Water Pollution Control (SWPC) is a customer funded utility owned and operated by the Town of Simsbury. The towns of Avon and Granby are also co-owners of the treatment facility. SWPC is responsible for the operation and maintenance of over 80 miles of collection system, five pumping stations and the treatment facility.

- Water Pollution Control completed lining of 7,500 linear feet of sanitary sewer to eliminate the infiltration of groundwater into the system, thereby reducing treatment costs.
- Staff replaced six variable frequency drives (VFD's), increasing system efficiency and reducing electrical consumption in the plant.
- Completed the replacement of obsolete programmable logic controllers (PLC'S); these PLC's control the operation of the plant equipment and processes.

Engineering

The Engineering Department provides professional infrastructure and building design, project management, and planning services that sustain and improve the current quality of life for Simsbury residents and businesses.

- Completed the replacement of site lighting and basketball court lighting at the Simsbury Farms Recreational Complex.
- Completed replacement of evaporative condenser and refrigeration controls at the Simsbury Farms Ice Rink.
- Completed the rehabilitation of the Drake Hill Road Bridge.
- Completed design documents for the Town Hall Parking and Safety Improvement project.
- Completed the final design plans for the rehabilitation of two town-owned bridges; Firetown Road Bridge Over Bissel Brook and Barndoor Hills Bridge Over Bissel Brook.
- Completed preliminary study for parking facility improvements at the Simsbury Meadows Performing Art Center. Assisted with obtaining STEAP grant for accessibility improvements at the Simsbury Meadows Performing Arts Center.



Drake Hill Road Bridge Rehabilitation

Planning and Community Development

The Department engages with the Town's residents and provides professional guidance and coordination in a manner that allows them to envision and plan for a highly desirable and livable town, and to implement and maintain that vision through the implementation of astute use of land in order to ensure a high quality of life for all generations. The Department includes the Planning Department as well as the Building Department.

- Staff continued work on comprehensive updates and consolidation of Zoning Regulations. Completed Phase 2 of the update and consolidation.
- Staff participated in business outreach meetings coordinated by the Town Managers' Office.
- Department provided staffing assistance to the Zoning Commission, Planning Commission, Conservation Commission, Design Review Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, East Weatogue Historic District Commission, and Aquifer Protection Agency.
- Staff assisted the Historic District Commission in updating the East Weatogue District Handbook.
- Assisted the Planning Commission in developing the Affordable Housing Plan.



Photo by Anna Stillman

Police Department

The Simsbury Police Department is a national and state accredited police department that provides law enforcement and public safety services, including operation of the E-911 Communications Center. The Department provides a full range of services under a community policing philosophy.

- The Police Department maintained national and state accreditation in a year that included a rigorous schedule of assessments by the Commission on Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). These assessments took place in August 2020, February 2021 and March 2021 at which time they reviewed compliance with over 384 standards, inspected documents and the facility and conducted 33 interviews with membership, town employees and the public.
- The Department took significant steps toward an improved command and organization structure with intentions of enhancements in service to the community, inspection and accountability. This included competitive processes which resulted in the hiring of a deputy chief of police and internal lieutenant promotions to fill command level oversight of the divisions.
- The Department continued its tradition of public safety services including partnerships, benevolence, education and awareness. Support for the community and region grew with enhanced awareness campaigns, distribution of masks and collections of food, backpacks and bicycles.



Backpack donation and distribution event hosted by the Simsbury PD

Simsbury Fire District

To minimize injuries, and property loss from fire, hazardous conditions, rescue situations, and other disasters, by providing excellent state of the art, life and property conservation, emergency and educational services while recognizing our people as our most important resource and the key to our success. The District is a separate taxing entity and independent organization from the town. The District also provides emergency management services to the Town.

- The Fire District completed another year of spending within budget with no bonding or borrowing of any funds.
- The District placed an order for a replacement pumper as part of our strategic 20-year apparatus replacement plan. The district also awaits delivery of a "Quint" combination ladder pump (delayed due to factory shortages).
- Two longtime employees celebrated their retirement, maintenance engineer Ron Kasulaitis and Fire Marshall, District Administrator and Emergency Management Director Kevin Kowalski. We thank them for their many years of dedicated service.
- President Gary Wilcox and Clerk John Solury were re-elected for two-year terms. President Gary Wilcox also appointed Hugh Caldwell to replace outgoing Commissioner John Smith for a three year term.
- The Fire District has future plans to expand our Weatogue training facility to ensure we are fully equipped for the ongoing training of our volunteers.

Simsbury Volunteer Ambulance Association

Simsbury Volunteer Ambulance Association (SVAA) has served the emergency medical needs of the community since 1957. In the past year SVAA's volunteer EMTs, augmented by our paid staff of Paramedics and EMTs, responded to approximately 2,080 emergency medical calls.

- SVAA actively kept our crews safe and ensured that any COVID exposures were kept to a minimum. In part this was done by obtaining PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) and sharing any surplus with the Main Street Partnership and local business that were in need.
- SVAA was awarded the Silver Plus award from the American Heart Association for excellence in the care of acute coronary syndrome.
- SVAA participated in many town-wide Birthday parades along with the Simsbury Volunteer Fire Department and the Simsbury Police Department as a way to say thank you to our Town residents and raise some spirits.

Simsbury Public Schools

The Simsbury Public Schools cultivate the mind, body, and character of each student. We engage students with a meaningful and rigorous academic foundation so that they can contribute to a global society with integrity, compassion, and resilience.

- During the 2020-21 school year, the school district adapted to provide remote, hybrid and inperson instruction to accommodate all of our students during the COVID pandemic.
- The number of Simsbury High School seniors completing at least one Advanced Placement (AP) course was 242.
- Our 11th graders performed well in both the Math (score of 557) and ELA (score of 572) portions of the SAT.
- U.S. News & World Report, the global authority in education rankings, reviewed more than 24,000 high schools in the U.S. and rated Simsbury High School #14 of Best High Schools in Connecticut and #640 nationally. SHS earned an overall score of 96.42 out of 100.
- SHS was awarded the first Unified Michael's Cup by the CT Interscholastic Athletic Conference. SHS received the award based on activities during the 2019-20 school year and was chosen to represent the many outstanding Unified Sports programs across the state.
- On May 4, 2021 residents voted at referendum to approve the expansion and renovation of Latimer Lane School. This project will break ground in June of 2022.
- The school district has moved forward with plans to add solar energy at each of the schools as roof renovation projects come forward. Renovation of the SHS roof occurred during the summer of 2021.



Picture provided by the BOE

Housing Authority

The Simsbury Housing Authority is dedicated to providing safe and affordable housing for limited income seniors and individuals with disabilities.

2020-2021 Initiatives and Accomplishments

- Resumed resident meetings and resident council meetings.
- Resumed activities again such as communion and rosary, coffee hour, bingo, walking club and exercise classes.
- As part of the Housing Authorities marketing outreach hosted the Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Breakfast 2020.
- Awarded \$4,881 for Housing Authority Small Improvement Program (HASIP) funding through CHFA which was used to purchase patio furniture for the Virginia Connolly Residence.
- Addition of a lighted breeze pergola, built by local Eagle Scouts.
- Began organizing a flu clinic with the Farmington Valley VNA to conduct a flu clinic for Murphy residents.

Probate Court

The Simsbury Regional Probate Court assists individuals and families residing in the district who require the services of the court in an efficient and compassionate manner. The Court strives to ease the process as much as possible knowing that during stressful times it is difficult to cope with the unknown.

- Despite the COVID pandemic, the Court remained open throughout the year via e-filing, mailed documents and correspondence. Hearings were conducted by Judge Becker telephonically and via WEBEX.
- During the past year, 218 applications were accepted for probate of decedent's estates. In addition, 192 small estate affidavits and tax purposes only estates were filed.
- The Court processed 37 applications for Conservatorship and several applications for Guardianship of the Estate and Person of minors, Guardianship of the Intellectually Disabled, Termination of Parental Rights, approval of Adoptions, Name Changes, and intervivos trust matters.



Drone photography by Corrado Galizia

This year saw the completion of the Town of Simsbury's acquisition process for the Meadowood Open Space, comprised of hundreds of acres of forest, farmland and wetlands. The newly acquired land complements the expansive trail network between Simsbury, Canton and Granby and protects an important corridor for wildlife and ecology.

The site may be included on the Connecticut Freedom Trail and the National Register of Historic Places. Grant funding from the CT State Historic Preservation Office and private donors will be used to preserve and maintain some of the site's historic barns. A ceremony to commemorate the acquisition was held in October, with town officials, public and nonprofit partners, and press in attendance.



FY 20-21 Financial Information

Expenditures

	\$	% of Total
Education	\$72,860,444	70.5%
Debt Service	\$5,471,465	5.3%
General Government	\$2,494,850	2.4%
Planning and Development	\$622,690	0.6%
Public Safety	\$5,204,282	5.0%
Public Works	\$4,576,783	4.4%
Parks & Recreation	\$2,445,357	2.4%
Health & Social Services	\$752,266	0.73%
Insurance & Benefits	\$6,254,509	6.05%
Other	\$2,712,480	2.62%
Total	\$103,404,988	100%

Revenues

Item	\$	
Property Taxes	\$93,165,711	
Intergovernmental	\$6,861,259	
Investments	\$58,259	
Charges for Services	\$829,062	
Licenses / Permits	\$2,176,508	
Other	\$1,224,147	
Total	\$104,314,947	

Mill Rate History

	Town	Fire District	Total
FY 16-17	37.12	1.23	38.35
FY 17-18	38.76	1.23	39.99
FY 18-19	36.42	1.17	37.59
FY 19-20	37.32	1.20	38.52
FY 20-21	37.09	1.19	38.28

Department	Full-Time Equivalent Employees
Town Manager's Office	4
Finance Department	8.83
Information Technology	2
Town Clerk's Office	3
Registrars of Voters	1
Simsbury Public Library	23.73
Culture, Parks and Recreation	19
Community and Social Services	6.45
Public Works	30.3
Water Pollution	11
Engineering	2.71
Planning and Community Development	7.54
Police Department	53.36
Sub-Total FTE Count (Town)	172.92
Board of Education	654.9
Total FTE Count (Town & BoE)	827.82

Board of Selectmen	Board of Finance	Board of Education
FY 20/21	FY 20/21	FY 20/21
Eric Wellman, First Selectman	Robert Pomeroy, Chair	Susan Salina, Chair
Sean Askham, Deputy First Selectman	Lisa Heavner, Vice Chair	Todd Burrick, Vice Chair
Jackie Battos	Arthur H. House	Jennifer Batcheler, Secretary
Wendy Mackstutis	Kevin Prell	Lydia Tedone
Mike Paine	Derek Peterson	Sharon Thomas
Chris Peterson	Linda Schofield	Jeffrey Tindal
Maria Capriola, Town Manager	Amy Meriwether, Finance Director	Tara Donahue Willerup
		Brian Watson
		Matthew Curtis, Superintendent



Town of Simsbury CT, 933 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury, CT 06070 PH: (860) 658-3200 FAX: (860) 658-3206

Town Hall Hours:

Mon 8:30am - 7:00pm | Tues - Thu 8:30am - 4:30pm | Fri 8:30am - 1:00pm https://www.simsbury-ct.gov/

https://www.facebook.com/TownofSimsbury